


Chapter 12

Emotional Intelligence in Integrative Medicine: Enhancing Patient–Centred Care Through Humanised Technology

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ABSTRACT

Emotional intelligence (EI) is vital in integrative medicine, which blends traditional and modern practices to provide holistic patient care. EI enhances patient-provider relationships by fostering empathy, effective communication, and shared decision-making, crucial for trust and collaboration. It also supports interdisciplinary teamwork, incorporating diverse healing modalities. With the rise of technology, EI ensures that digital tools like telemedicine and health apps complement, rather than replace, human interaction. Furthermore, EI aids in managing provider stress and preventing burnout. Training in EI empowers healthcare professionals to improve patient care and adapt to evolving challenges. Future research should focus on integrating EI into integrative medicine education to optimize outcomes while maintaining compassionate, human-centered care.

1. INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Convergence of Integrative Medicine and Emotional Intelligence

Integrative medicine represents a holistic approach to healthcare that combines traditional healing practices with modern medical technologies, emphasising the treatment of the patient as a whole. This comprehensive framework addresses not only the physical but also the emotional, mental, social, and spiritual dimensions of health, thereby enhancing the overall patient experience and outcomes. Emotional intelligence (EI) emerges as a pivotal competency for healthcare providers within this paradigm, significantly influencing patient care and therapeutic outcomes (da Silva, 2022; Reis da Silva, 2024a). The cultivation of empathy, effective communication skills, self-awareness, and resilience among prac-

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tioners is essential for enhancing patient-centred care in integrative medicine settings (Al, 2018; White & Grason, 2019; Karimi et al., 2021).

The integration of emotional intelligence into healthcare practices fosters a deeper understanding of patients' needs and emotions, which is crucial for building trust and rapport (da Silva, 2022; Reis da Silva, 2024a). Research indicates that healthcare providers who exhibit high levels of emotional intelligence are better equipped to navigate the complexities of patient interactions, leading to improved patient satisfaction and adherence to treatment plans (Al, 2018; Karimi et al., 2021; Walkiewicz et al., 2018). Furthermore, the ability to empathise and connect with patients on an emotional level contributes to the humanisation of healthcare delivery, a fundamental aspect of integrative medicine (White & Grason, 2019; Karimi et al., 2021; Burcher, 2011). Incorporating simulation and the use of service users in healthcare training is crucial for enhancing empathy and compassion among practitioners, as it allows learners to engage directly with real-world scenarios and understand patients' perspectives and needs more deeply (Reis da Silva and Mitchell, 2024a; Reis da Silva and Mitchell, 2024b). This immersive approach fosters a more profound emotional connection and improves the quality of care provided by future healthcare professionals (Fitzpatrick et al., 2023).

The convergence of integrative medicine and emotional intelligence underscores the necessity for healthcare professionals to develop these competencies actively. By doing so, they can enhance the quality of care provided, ensuring that it is not only clinically effective but also compassionate and tailored to the individual needs of patients (Al, 2018; White & Grason, 2019; Karimi et al., 2021). This holistic approach ultimately leads to better health outcomes and a more satisfying healthcare experience for both patients and providers.

1.2 The Role of Technology in Integrative Medicine

The advent of technology has significantly transformed healthcare delivery, particularly in the realm of integrative medicine. Telemedicine platforms, mobile health applications, and virtual wellness programs have revolutionised patient engagement, education, and self-care, providing unprecedented opportunities for enhancing patient-provider interactions (Shirzad, 2016; Chita-Tegmark et al., 2019; Cowley et al., 2023). However, the widespread adoption of these technologies raises concerns regarding the potential depersonalisation of care, which can undermine the therapeutic alliance between patients and providers (Akinwale, 2024; Walkiewicz et al., 2018).

Emotional intelligence serves as a crucial framework for ensuring that technology in integrative medicine remains grounded in empathy and ethical practice. By leveraging emotional intelligence, healthcare providers can maintain human connections even in digital interactions, ensuring that patients feel valued and understood (Ismail, 2023; Walkiewicz et al., 2018). For instance, providers with high emotional intelligence can effectively communicate with patients through telemedicine platforms, addressing their emotional and psychological needs while delivering clinical care (Al, 2018; Walkiewicz et al., 2018). Moreover, the integration of technology into healthcare necessitates a re-evaluation of the skills required for effective patient care. Emotional intelligence, particularly in terms of self-regulation and social awareness, becomes increasingly important as healthcare providers navigate the challenges posed by technology (da Silva, 2022; Akinwale, 2024; Walkiewicz et al., 2018). By fostering these competencies, practitioners can enhance their ability to connect with patients, ensuring that technology serves as a tool for improving care rather than a barrier to meaningful interactions (Shirzad, 2016; Walkiewicz et al., 2018).

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